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INFO RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS 2960  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 0281  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 0850  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0371  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0342  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3777  
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT 2317  
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT 8213  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 2080  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0626

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STATE FOR NEA/MAG, INR/NESA/NAP

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TAGS: [MO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#)

SUBJECT: NUMBER OF IRAQI REFUGEES IN MOROCCO GROWING

Classified By: Principal Officer Douglas C. Greene for Reasons 1.4  
(b), (d).

REF: A) 07 CASABLANCA 00193  
B) 07 CASABLANCA 00135

¶1. (SBU) During a January 29 meeting, UNHCR Chief of Mission Johannes Van Der Klaauw told poloff that nearly fifteen percent of UNHCR's recognized refugees in Morocco are Iraqi. Van Der Klaauw said the Iraqis began to arrive in significant numbers in early 2007.

So far, he said, he has registered 46 cases totaling 111 individuals. This case to individual ratio is high in comparison to other refugee populations in the country, due to the large size of some Iraqi families arriving in Morocco. The average case size of other populations is approximately 1.2 individuals per case.

¶2. (SBU) According to Van Der Klaauw, a majority of the steadily growing population of Iraqis, that have chosen to seek status in Morocco, have familial ties to Morocco. Many of the Iraqi refugees have either Moroccan spouses or siblings married to Moroccans. For this reason, Van Der Klaauw stated, they often settle in remote areas of the country close to the Moroccan relative's ancestral home. Unlike the sub-Saharan refugee communities in Morocco, Iraqis have not found it unnecessary to organize support networks in Rabat and Casablanca but instead rely on extended Moroccan family groups. Moreover, because of the common language, many Iraqi refugees have integrated at a much faster rate than other refugee groups. Van Der Klaauw observed that there seems to be a nearly even mix of Sunni and Shia registering with UNHCR and that a high percentage of the Iraqis are suffering from medical problems.

¶3. (SBU) Recent Iraqi arrivals told Van Der Klaauw and his colleagues that Moroccan visas, once available through a simple process at Moroccan Embassies in the region, are now becoming more difficult to obtain. One refugee claimed that for many years he had no problem obtaining a Moroccan visa through Embassies in Amman and Damascus. However, he added, recently it had become increasingly difficult for his family and other Iraqis to acquire Moroccan visas. Van Der Klaauw also shared a number of stories he had heard about Iraqis arriving at Casablanca's Mohammad V international airport, some with suspicious visas, who were detained for long periods before being sent back to their flight's point of departure. In the worst case scenario, he continued, the flights last point of departure could be the last leg of a long convoluted journey through three continents, often a sub-Saharan city where the family is stranded with no support network and often no money.

¶4. (SBU) UNHCR officials in Rabat said that for the most part, Iraqi refugees are less demanding than many of the sub-Saharanans and seem to be satisfied with their situation in Morocco. Some expect to return, eventually, to Iraq. There are a few, however, who have demanded resettlement in the U.S. A number of cases have contacted the U.S. Embassy seeking resettlement as well. These cases are being taken under consideration by UNHCR for recommendation of resettlement.

¶5. (C) Comment: Although Moroccan citizens and the GOM are vocal in their solidarity with Iraqis when push comes to shove these sentiments may be qualified. With reports of toughening up on visa policy and stricter access controls at the airport, the GOM may be putting the brakes on its newest immigrant population. In recent years the GOM has been reluctant to move forward and officially recognize refugees and asylum seekers due to fear of becoming a magnet for sub-Saharan economic migrants it cannot afford to support. This time, the refugees are fellow Muslims that the country would be hard-pressed to reject outright but, in their eyes, harder pressed to absorb in any great numbers.

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